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ABSTRACT

A study explored the experiences of American Indian college students at a university where most students were White. Data were obtained through interviews with 16 Native students, followed by a group discussion. Findings indicate that American Indian students experienced feelings of isolation, loneliness, and discomfort because of looks and stares, lack of respect, thoughtless comments and stereotypes, the omission of their people from the curriculum, a need for role models, a lack of institutional support, and both overt and covert hostility. Institutions of higher education may have an official rhetoric that they support diversity and may recruit American Indian students, but when these students arrive, they do not find support for themselves personally. Universities are using curricula that were designed to celebrate the achievements of primarily White men, to train people for jobs and professions that have historically maintained positions of power and control for White men, using teaching and assessment methods through which White middle- and upper-class men excel. Typically college initiatives such as better financial packages, supplemental college preparation for students, increased support services, more programming, and more role models seek to help retain Indian students without addressing the basic precepts and foundations on which the institution was built. Institutions of higher education would do well to tackle the causes of student alienation rather than the symptoms. (TD)

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1

PORTRAIT IN ALIENATION:
Native American Students on a Predominantly White Campus

Paper Presented at the
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PORTRAIT IN ALIENATION:
Native American Students on a Predominantly White Campus

I got a lot of discouragement from advising going into my first semester. My first advising appointment was really bad to where I couldn't stand the advisor, and she didn't have no, like, sympathy. She didn't even sympathize with what I was going through or anything. Saying, "What am I doing here?" Just because I came as a freshman without a major. Well, I mean, I knew what I wanted to do, but I didn't declare a major right away. I had a lot of discouragement from my advisor saying that, you know, if I didn't come prepared to college that I should just leave and not even deal with it. Um, you know I did declare a major, my biology major, but she thought that I wasn't prepared nor should pursue a biology degree, not because I'm Indian, I think, she just stereotyped me right away that I was ignorant and didn't know a lot about coming here or being a college student. I got that feeling that she probably thought that she was wasting her time on me because I wouldn't excel. She told me I had to do this and that. She gave me a piece or paper and said, "Here's the classes you have to take to prepare for it," and that was it. I had questions. She said she had more students waiting outside, so I got the hint.

And the whole issue of skin color, I mean like differences, appearance. You see this guy walking to class with long hair, dark skin, you just think he's not the same as everybody else. He's not part of the whole group. I guess the first reaction people get is they're scared. That's what I felt. That they're always scared. It just felt that way to me...like every time I went to class, I felt all these eyes staring at me. I felt like I was the only Native, you know, on campus.. Couldn't fit in anywhere. Just being around a place where you never grew up in, where you never even tasted you know. It's not like that on the rez. I mean you don't come in contact with white people as much.

Homesickness, that was a little bump, got homesick. And I missed family and home and my grandma got sick you know different things like my dad had a heart attack, just little things like that, my mother got sick. You know my brothers were in accidents. A friend passed away, and that was a big thing like first semester. Just stuff like that would arise that would make me worry.

One of my professors was making points about Native Americans, and the only reason I would have made these accusations is because he was misleading the class with inappropriate information ...information that I had studied from historians, you know...a lot of Native American history that was corrected. He was turning it around. You know just didn't make it sound right.

I'd be coming home from the library late at night on a Friday or Sunday night or something and come in contact with students who'd been drinking, white students. Racial slurs start coming out, and I don't stand for that. I was just merely coming home, just walking, mainly...I was walking in front of them. At the time my hair was long; my hair was down to my back and it was braided. I told 'em that, you know, it's wrong to do that. Shove came, you know. Shoving started, pushing and all. That was it. And I got detained, but they didn't get detained. I had beat most of them up to where they couldn't get up. And I was detained, and they were let free. I told them it was in self-defense, and they didn't believe me. It was three guys against my word,

and they were all white, so...It was a no-win situation, you know. The officer was white, and he believed them. They were the ones that were bloodied, you know. But I got mad.

And after a while, I thought, well, maybe this isn't the place for me. That's why a lot of students just leave because they don't feel welcome here.

For how many Native American students is this the first semester scenario? Or the entire college experience? My qualitative inquiry into the campus lives and collegiate experiences of Native American undergraduate students sought the answers to this question and to see what patterns emerged from their collective experiences. My study leads me and I hope my readers to ponder both the results of the experiences on these students and the root causes.

Significance

The importance of this study lies in well known facts that Native Americans even with a small total population, just under two million in the 1990 census, have been historically and remain the single most underrepresented ethnic group in American colleges and universities (McDonald, 1993). Among minorities striving to complete college, American Indians have long been reported to be among the least, if not the least, successful (Astin, 1982; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Tijerina & Biemer, 1988).

As a higher education community and as a society we need to find ways to meet the needs of these students and to help them succeed in their collegiate efforts for several reasons. The composite population of Native Americans is economically poorer, experiences more unemployment, and is less formally educated than the rest of the nation (Wright, 1991). High suicide rates, high infant mortality rates, lower life expectancy, high rates of diabetes and alcoholism, and poor nutrition attest to the fact that the quality of life enjoyed by much of our nation is not shared by many in the Native American community. What is the path to

improvement? Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) state that a Bachelor's degree is " a major, if not the major prerequisite for entree" into the more lucrative managerial and professional positions (p.575). The limited participation rates and low proportion of Bachelors degrees awarded to Native American would suggest that a significant portion of this segment of society is poised to miss out on the opportunities to succeed in higher education, which enable them to move on to assume productive roles in society. There are a growing number of examples of how the credentials of education and the professions have helped Native people become leaders in their own communities (Garrod & Larimore, 1997; White, 1990). Their communities cry out for teachers, entrepreneurs, health care workers, counselors, doctors. Considering the individual, fiscal, and societal costs associated with failure to complete college, society can no longer afford excluding populations simply because they are different from the mainstream or prefer to remain within their own cultural contexts. This country can no longer afford not to provide higher education that meets their needs and those of their communities.

Methodology

This study used the grounded theory methodology of Strauss & Corbin, (1990). In using grounded theory the researcher attempts to derive theory by the triangulation of multiple sources and types of data collection, by observing the interrelationships of categories of information, and by the refining of the meaning presented by the data. In this case, sixteen students participated in in-depth interviews using open-ended questions. For member checks the students were given printed copies of their interview transcripts to read and to clarify meanings and misunderstandings for the researcher. I used participant observation to view some of these students again in the social setting of the weekly American Indian Student Association dinners, social gatherings and meetings. Field notes from these observations were added to the interview transcripts. As data were added, I used a "constant comparative" method, looking for patterns

and commonalities in the experiences. Finally the students were invited to participate in a group discussion at which I presented what I saw emerging as patterns in their college experiences. They provided feedback on the conclusions I was drawing.

Findings

The findings of this study include a feeling of isolation and loneliness, discomfort because of looks and stares, lack of respect, thoughtless comments and stereotypes, the omission of their people from the curriculum, a need for role models, a lack of institutional support, and both overt and covert hostility.

Feeling of Isolation and Loneliness

For some the apprehension begins before they arrive, when they realize that they've selected a university in a predominately white part of the country. One said when she learned where her husband was going, "It's going to be a mostly white population. I was awfully scared about it, because I had no idea there were other Indian people here." Another said, "When I came here I about freaked out. I was walking down the street, and everybody is white, and that's just scary. You know, I'm like, where are the black people? Where are the yellow people? Where are the brown people? There was like nobody. They were all white people with blond hair basically. I was really freaking out." Still a third responded, "It really is an almost all-white campus with everything geared to them." "Since I've left home I've sometimes found myself isolated as the only Indian in a group." A student discussing her loneliness during her first year on campus said, "That was a big difference. I thought there would be a lot of Indians, just from what I learned from orientations." And another said, "I'm the only person of color in all my classes." One said, "I felt very isolated at times...Maybe if we can find some other Indian people it'll be OK...the community is so small...I mean you're right in the middle of

nowhere...myself in a room with a bunch of all white people." From another, "When I first got here, which was last spring, I mean I just never felt so out of place. I mean from my background being out of place all the time, (she was adopted into a white family) when I got here, I never felt so out of place because of my color. I felt like I was the only Native on campus. Couldn't fit in anywhere. I'm like the only minority in classes most of the time. I walk into a class, you know, it's all white students." Discussing how it feels in class to be the only Native student, one said, "There are just a few other minority students, so it kind of takes a lot of courage sometimes if you're talking about a certain topic, and I can't just sit there and be quiet. I have to say something, you know. And I have to voice my opinion, and sometimes that's not an easy thing to do because it doesn't seem like there's any support from the rest of the class." Loneliness, these comments show, can occur in a crowd, for unless one feels a part of the group, that student is one Native American with his or her perspectives and opinions all alone. It is a characteristic of life both inside and outside of the classroom for these students.

Need for Role Models

This problem of feeling so alone on campus, might be alleviated one student services staff member said, if there were more staff and faculty members who were also Native American or other people of color. She spoke of the importance "for some students to see someone that looks like them that has in fact been successful." Students also voiced the desire for role models saying, "And we've wanted more Native faculty. It's sort of strange having a non-Native tell you about a Native subject. Not that they can't know a lot, but it's a different perspective." Another student: "I think that my experience here would have been different with an Indian professor." From a student talking about people of color in the Special Support Services office: "They've been through what we're going through, so I'm sure they'd be understanding." Although the staff was not Native American, the minority experience of African Americans

provided some sense of commonality. From a staff person in Special Support Services, "I think there need to be more faculty here that are people of color…because students have so many needs, we burn out because there's not someone else that they can talk to." All of these comments speak of the need to talk with and be with people who have had like experiences, similar backgrounds, or have faced similar questions and look like you.

The Looks, the Stares

One factor contributing to a sense of difference was the way whites looked at them at times. One young man voiced it as, "Well the whole issue of skin color, I mean like differences, appearance. You see this guy walking to class with long hair, dark skin. You just think he's not the same as everybody else…like, what is he doing here? This is not the place for him. Those kind of eyes were on me; they just thought differently of me. They weren't accepting." A Native woman said, "I always felt when I walked in the store somebody was watching." And another, "Indians over here get noticed. A lot of white people, they twisted their necks, and that bothered my boyfriend big time." She gestured and showed me how they crane their necks to stare at her.

Lack of Respect

Another way in which they feel their experience is not like other students' is in terms of the respect they feel they receive. One student reflected on a freshman year when she and a friend attempted to gain equal footing. "We used to dress up in suits to go to class, and that's because we felt we were given respect if we dressed up. If we dressed the same way the white students dress…we get nothing because we're students of color. Therefore we're automatically slouching or like it's assumed we're here because we got scholarships…People don't think that we are real students and even gain the right to be here. We have to go the extra mile to prove that we are serious both to professors and to other students."

Another young woman said, "The school is made up basically of whites, and all your programs are going to be basically white majority, and they're going to be coming from a white experience and you'll be maybe the only Native student in the class, and you're going to be shot down…You're only one person, you're the minority and they just completely shoot you down and the teachers will ignore you. I found that out when I discuss something American Indian, and you're the only person with that opinion. Nobody else has that experience, so they don't have that opinion. The teacher will be like, "That's inconsequential, let's move on."

A young man's perception of what his professors feel, "It's expected that the white students are going to do well and that the minority students are going to have to scrap for the rest of the grades." These perceptions all point to their feeling that they are not on equal footing with other students, that they are somehow less.

Thoughtless Comments and Stereotypes

These students face stereotyping comments, are the brunt of jokes, and are stung by hurtful phrases in our language in ways that the white student is not. One student assessed it this way, "I think it's hard, it's really hard for anybody who's different in any way to come into a place. Just because people are so judgmental, and they don't really know how to act or what to say or what's the wrong thing to say or the right thing to say." A number of students mentioned things which were said, some of which they laugh off as humorous, but others they find more hurtful. An education student said, "I was student teaching and my cooperating teacher at the elementary school said something like, 'Oh, they're just wild Indians!'" Another young woman answered my question about stereotypes by saying, "Oh, yeah, like 'do you still live in tipis?' I get that one all the time." A fourth woman said, "We're faced with, on a daily basis with things like, 'Hey Pocahontas. I'm John Smith.' I mean you always meet stuff like that that other students don't. And it's funny for a while. But…"

One girl said that when her friends learn she's part Native American it is a surprised and perhaps condescending, "'Oh!' I guess they half expect me to be wearing feathers and turquoise jewelry and this little leather getup with fringe and some leather moccasins," she said.

These students put up with being treated like objects to be talked about and studied. A female engineering student told me about her advisor. "I had met him at a picnic with his wife and they had their grandson with them. I had my hair just pulled back into a braid that day, and I had my key chain which has got a little beaded moccasin on it. They said, 'Well, do you know *what* she is?' And I kind of sat there. And he goes to this little boy who was probably four years old, 'she's an engineer and an Indian.' I wondered, do they go around and say that about anybody else? Oh, and he asked me one time who I liked to date. You know, if I liked to date Native American men, and I was thinking, well, do you ask your white students who come in here, who do you like to date?" Unintentionally discriminatory as these comments may be, their effect on the Native student is dehumanizing. She is the target of a joke, viewed as a stereotype rather than as person, or questioned as a statistic.

Left Out of the Curriculum

They feel alone on campus. They feel stared at, see few like themselves on campus, are shown less respect, and are joked about. What about the material they are learning? One student noted, "It really is an almost all-white campus with everything geared to them." This impression holds true for the much of what goes on in the classrooms as well. Remember the comments above, "your programs are…basically white majority. They come from a white experience. Nobody else has your experience, so they don't have your opinion. Teachers will ignore you. That's inconsequential, let's move on." These students say they are not reflected in the texts, the lectures, and often not in the discussions.

Their hunger for knowledge of their people's contributions to our society is poignantly expressed by this student, "A writing class I took…was my first introduction to Native writing. It was Leslie Silkwood who wrote it, but it just really captured all my senses like, 'Wow!' I didn't even know there were Native writers. I didn't even know. It was really well-written. Then that's kind of put me right into trying to find my identity, and so everything I did from that point had to do with who I am. All my papers, all my research, everything."

That the required curriculum does not allow the pursuit of equally valid studies which are more culturally relevant to Native students is expressed by another, "As one of my foreign language requirements, I didn't want to take one of the [offered] languages. I wanted to take Lakota. I tried to get it pushed through that I could take Lakota as a foreign language, but they wouldn't allow it. I wanted to mail order books and tapes and stuff and learn something. I wanted to learn not something the school system wanted me to learn."

A third expressed the excitement of taking a minority studies course and finally receiving history that rang true to her, "It was like a crash course in like American history every hour and…not as fantasy like we'd been taught…" Similarly, a freshman said the best class he had was his Native American History. "It was really interesting. I learned a lot of things I never knew." The fact that eleven of the fifteen students specifically mentioned courses in the American Indian and Native Studies department is indicative of the importance of this kind of knowledge for these students. These are not required courses. More than their thirst for this knowledge, the enthusiasm with which culturally relevant course material is received by these students also indicates how little they have come in contact with this material during the other totality of their education. The focal university does have an oasis of minority studies departments offering not majors, but certificates in these areas. However the bulk of the course work taken by these students in their major fields is presented using the canons of Western knowledge, not the contributions of their own culture.

Pedagogical methods, too, come from a Western Civilization perspective which can conflict with the cultural norms and learning styles of the Native cultures. As one student said, "I think there were other ways of evaluating me than whether I participated in class. I only had this one teacher; he was very understanding of the fact that I wasn't that comfortable getting up there and talking. He didn't expect me to be talking all the time, which is a problem with science education...I needed something like him. One of the faults they [the department] have is that I was expected to, as a part of my grade, be talking every single time. Being quick with my answers, and I just couldn't do that. So I was thinking, I had ideas, but I was just sitting back listening to them. If I had a response, before I could talk somebody else would jump in."

Lack of Institutional Support

The students' harshest criticisms came in the area of university support for their ethnicity. "I don't think they're doing a great job at all for anybody…They say, 'You are Native American and we want to help'…But they really don't do anything." In answer to my question, "What would you say about the University's support for your ethnicity?" another responded, "Well, the first word I want to say is artificial." My sense is that these students hear an official rhetoric that the university supports diversity and recruits them to come, but that when they arrive they do not find support for them personally. I selected these quotes because they were typical of a negative perception of university support that ran through many interviews. Support that exists for minorities in general or for all students on financial aid was not viewed as support for them as Native Americans. An appreciation for their culture, an openness to their perspective on issues is not a part of the campus, they say. All of these factors contribute to a sense of isolation and alienation.

Hostility: Overt and Covert

Even on a campus where the white majority often think there are few racial tensions, students of color may experience hostility. One student described a subtle expression of this hostility. "I think there are times when it's hostile, like in Native American studies when you're trying to explain things. I think there's almost a hostile feeling like white kids never speak up when someone of color tries to express something in my classes. White kids like never speak up; they're quiet, but you sense there is some hostility that they have some things they want to say."

A sophomore woman described a less subtle form of hostility as she reflected on her freshman year: "I was in a triple [three person room in the dorm] and I almost went home freshman year because of this situation. I was getting hate mail. Her friends were coming after me. I couldn't leave the house by myself…The police became involved. And she [roommate] ended up getting kicked out of the room…And if she ever comes near me again, the police will take action and the university will kick her out, because it was that bad… I've never experienced anything like that before, so I just didn't know exactly how to take it and I almost left."

Another woman speaking of an off-campus experience said, "I think there have been a couple of incidents where I thought they happened because I was brown…I was once stopped by a police officer and they told me I had to get my husband into the police station because they wanted to question somebody who they felt was passing bad checks because that somebody was supposed to be in a car like mine. And I thought that's just so weird. When my husband went in, it was just immediately dismissed because he was not what they expected. He's Irish American." These findings are similar to those of a study of Native Americans by Ruey-Lin, LaCounte, & Eder (1988) which found the "destructive effect of the feeling of isolation is related to the feeling that the White campus is hostile towards them."

Theories of Student Satisfaction

Literature on college student satisfaction has been guided largely by the theoretical models of Tinto on dropout behavior with a heavy emphasis on integration of the student in both academic and social spheres of the campus and of Kuh and Whitt on involvement of the student in the collegiate experience. As with Tinto's model, Kuh and Whitt use a model of "involving" the student in campus activities like governance committees. They recommended celebrations of Cinco de Mayo and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, recognition of minority students for their service and academic achievements, and orientation programs for new students of color.

What my study found were students who for the most part indicated that their involvement with campus activities was largely with the Native American organizations. In dormitories and classes they were often the only person of color on their floor or in their classes. Friendships with other students of color and with foreign students were a part of their experience and occasionally friendships with white students. However, pervasive in their personal lives, in their classes, in interactions with faculty and staff, in their lives in the community were incidents that made them feel unwelcome, like they didn't belong, in essence, that alienated them.

Theories of Alienation

Student alienation has been studied by Loo and Rolison (1986) who found alienation in ethnic minority students is similar to that discussed within Tinto's framework as "malinegration" which he defines as "the outcome of one's holding values highly divergent from those of the social collectivity, and …insufficient personal interaction with other members of the collectivity." Much work on alienation is grounded in Dean's Theory of Alienation (Dean, 1961) which he defined as having three elements: powerlessness, normlessness, and social isolation. Dean's descriptions of these elements are very close to the comments made by the Native students in this study.

A part of *powerlessness,* Dean says, is helplessness and of being used for purposes other than his own. In this study one of the students questioned it this way, "Are you assimilating too much? And are you getting caught up in the thing that you're morally and ethically you're against? But are you getting caught up in it just to please?" Another said, "You question whether you're assimilating too much, but you're giving up your own values." They express both doing things to please and giving up something. Do they feel they are being used for someone else's purposes? We as educators must ponder deeply what our purpose is when we educate them to "fit in," to learn the "white way," to study, to talk, to write, to think our way. We require this conformity to our rules and standards to get the grade.

Normlessness, the second element, is derived by Durkheim's concept of *anomie,* a painful uneasiness or anxiety, a feeling of separation from group standards, a feeling of pointlessness or that no certain goals exist. This uneasiness was described by a student as, "...just to be constantly second-guessing yourself and questioning yourself and trying to fit in is a really difficult thing." Another speaks to the purpose of education, "You get really frustrated with...what are you doing for the better purpose of everything anyway?" She continued to talk of this difference in group standards when she said, "It's just so different here, it's a college campus, it's a college town. It's so much more competitive. It's so much more, like, materialistic, I think."

Finally *social isolation,* "a feeling of separation from the group or of isolation from group standards." (DeGrazia, 1948). Many of the students connected being the only Indian with being isolated as in this comment, "Since I've left home I've sometimes found myself isolated as the only Indian in a group." Another spoke of group values and standards in this way, "The difference with white students...the things that are important to them are a lot different, than the things that are important to me."

The student expressions build a portrait of alienation. To date when higher education has sought to resolve problems of minority student isolation (Madrazo-Peterson & Rodrigues, 1978) and alienation (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Steward, Germain, & Jackson, 1992), the suggestions made and often the initiatives taken have involved better financial packages, supplementing college preparation for students, increased supportive services, more programming, and role models. Such efforts seek to recruit the Native student to campus and to help retain the student in an environment without essentially changing that environment. That very environment may be the problem. Both the Tinto and the Kuh and Whitt models seek to involve or integrate the minority student in an institution, higher education, which is itself alienating to them. The changes these researchers prescribe are surface fixes, a few programs and people to be added without addressing the basic precepts and foundations on which the institution was built. It is these foundational principles which are themselves alienating.

Universities are educating using a curriculum which was designed to celebrate the achievement of primarily white men, to train people for jobs and professions which have historically maintained positions of power and control for white men, using teaching and assessment methods at which white middle and upper class men excel. Critical theorist Pagano (1999) says "the curricula of North American colleges and universities, despite the emergence of new disciplines…continue to be largely developed for the education of young gentlemen [historically white males of means]. One may ask whether such curricula will either continue to exclude the previously excluded by alienating them from the educational experience, whether they produce in such students either a double consciousness wherein they will see themselves as Other insofar as they identify with the curriculum, or whether they will simply become like the educated sons of educated men. Neither outcome will benefit either persons or institutions."

Pagano places college curricula under a critical lens and notes that by the very fact that we refer to our ongoing struggle over curriculum "culture wars" we reveal the degree to which

education is indeed implicated in culture and our understanding of civilization. In just the same way, I would propose that we place all of the issues raised by these Native American research participants under that critical lens. We should explore whether the individual and collective acts which isolate the Native student, the looks, the stares, the lack of respect, the use of stereotypes also derive from our understanding of civilization.

Scheurich and Young (1997) put forth a model of levels of racism: individual racism: overt and covert, institutional racism, societal racism, and civilizational racism (this final level being where they place our epistemological racism). Using their model I would like to explore the possibility that the alienation felt by Native American students, and quite surely other minority group as well, when they travel to our college campuses to receive an education, lie not within those students and their "adjustment" to collegiate life, but rather have as their root causes, a racism which pervades our civilization at all four of these levels, individual, institutional, societal, and civilizational.

Although we could at first view many of the incidents mentioned by the Native students in this study as acts of individuals who are expressing their personal prejudices, a case can be made for their being normalized behavior in one or several of the larger arenas, the institution, the society, or civilization. The grouping of students often by racial identity (Tatum, 1997) which was alluded to by the Native students' feeling isolated when they were the only Native or only person of color in a class, becomes a part of institutional mores on many college campuses. There are tables in the dorms, sections of the student union, and hallway hangouts which within a few weeks of school's opening in the fall become noticeably segregated spots. This is more than individual choice, it has become a normalized way of acting in the institution. The institution which has made no attempt to change such isolating characteristics by policy nor by training cannot place all blame on individual racism.

A person looks, a carload of students crane their necks to stare. Our mothers told us not to stare, but within our society, staring at those who are different is not taboo. In society, through the media, these acts are condoned, not censured, and thus normalized in the society as accepted behavior, hurtful though they may be. That these acts are disproportionately targeted at the subordinate ethnic and racial groups makes it racism and inherent in it is a power prerogative that white people have the right to look at others this way.

That American Indian and Native Studies, African American Studies and Women's Studies are separate studies, implying not part of the general curriculum, is an institutional choice. That a course from these departments is not a general education requirement and that topics from these courses are not part of American history or World Literature is racism at the institutional, perhaps societal, and even civilizational level. The choice to handle these bodies of knowledge in this way is broader than a single institution. Our entire western civilization has set as preeminent, the literature, the history, the scientific paradigms, and the arts of the industrial nations and relegated to the category "primitive" the similar bodies of knowledge from other cultures.

The several instances noted by students of treatment by the police which differed from the way such issues were typically handled for white citizens is possibly, and quite likely, indicative of normalized behavior within the police department. There can be individually racist police officers, but when their actions bringing people in to the station based on color or race are not denounced or repudiated by others within the institution, one should carefully scrutinize whether we are dealing with institutional racism. National notice is now taken of racial profiling, a common practice in police departments, department stores and other institutions. The racially different treatment noted by several of the students indicates institutional racism in police departments.

Native students noted both that the college classroom environment is more competitive and college town more materialistic than they are comfortable with. The western assumption, and it is just that—an assumption, that to be the best at something is always and ultimately desirable runs counter to the Native value in cooperation for the good of the extended family or the clan. Yet our grading systems, our graduation with high honors, our scholarship programs are all based on this western civilizational value in being the best. The practice of forcing all in our colleges to take on this system of values may be analyzed as civilizational racism. Likewise to many of the Native students it appears that the ultimate goal of college graduation as presented by their professors and believed by most students is material acquisition. Getting the good job with the highest pay is certainly stressed. Is societal racism or even civilizational racism involved when we look upon those who do not have these goals as lazy or poor students?

In conclusion, I would propose that the experiences common to these Native American students on a predominantly white campus result in an alienation consisting of powerlessness, normlessness, and social isolation. Theories in the areas of student satisfaction, retention and persistence have stressed involving and integrating students into an alienating environment with little consideration of the underlying causes of their alienation. I would propose that this phenomenon be viewed through the lenses of multiple levels of racism and that higher education tackle the causes rather than the symptoms of student alienation.

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